

# AIDS Among Persons Aged 50 and Older in Virginia

A recent profile of AIDS among persons aged 50 and older that appeared in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report1 (MMWR) describes the similarities and differences of AIDS in this age group to the condition among 13 to 49 year olds.

The *MMWR* report was based on data

Statistically significant differences exist between the ≥50 group and those aged 13-49 in the national data. In the United States, women ≥50 are 16.4% of AIDS cases but constitute 20.6% among 13-49 year-olds. Injecting drug use (IDU) was a risk factor for HIV infection in 19.2% of older cases but

Number and Percentage of Persons Reported With AIDS by Age Group and Selected Characteristics in Virginia through March 31, 1998				
Characteristic	Age Group in Years			
	50 and over		13 - 49	
	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	830	86	7,901	85
Female	134	14	1,358	15
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	533	55	4,189	45
Black, non-Hispanic	408	42	4,699	51
Other/Unknown	23	2	371	4
<b>Transmission Risk</b>				
MSM	490	51	5,135	55
IDU	119	12	1,732	19
MSM/IDU	17	2	565	6
Heterosexual contact	116	12	1,101	12
Blood or blood products	115	12	197	2
NIR/Other risk	107	11	515	6
Total*	964	100	9,259	100
<b>AIDS Defining Condition</b>				
HIV encephalopathy	77	5	435	3
Wasting syndrome	166	11	1,189	8
Other opportunistic infection	909	63	9,674	68
Severe HIV immunosuppression	295	20	2,917	21
Total*	1,447	100	14,215	100

\* Totals do not equal because one patient may have more than one condition

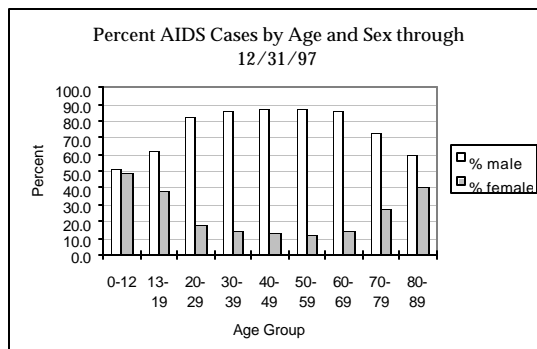
**Table 1**

supplied to CDC from AIDS surveillance systems, including Virginia's, in the United States.

accounted for more than a quarter of all cases in the 13-49 group (25.6%). The CDC also reports that two AIDS-defining conditions (HIV encephalopathy and

wasting syndrome) occur significantly more frequently in the ≥50 group. Severe HIV immunosuppression is diagnosed more frequently in the 13-49 group (57.9% vs 52.5%). AIDS among Virginians who are 50 and older presents a profile similar to the national data (Table 1).

**Gender.** In Virginia, female cases aged 50 and over account for 13.9% of cases in contrast with 14.7% in the 13-49 year old range. The proportion of female AIDS cases is higher in younger age groups (13-19, 38.5%; 20-29, 17.4%).



**Figure 1**

**Race/Ethnicity.** Differences by race also exist (see). Whites account for 55.3% of all 50 and over cases but less than half (45.2%) of cases in the 13-49 range. Black cases account for 42.3% in the older group and 50.8% in the younger one. This reflects the fact that the AIDS epidemic in the state is changing and is disproportionately affecting the Black population. Other races and ethnic groups<sup>2</sup> are affected but the number of cases (23 in the ≥50 group and 371 in the 13-49 group) is too low to make reliable statements.

**Transmission Risk.** Differences in transmission risk also exist. Before the advent of tests to detect the virus, infection due to HIV-contaminated blood or blood products resulted in 11.9% of all cases in the

≥50 group but less than 2.1% among 13-49 year-olds. This difference is due to more frequent medical procedures among the older group. More than half (55.5%) of all cases between 13 and 49 are attributed to men having sex with men (MSM). Although MSM accounts for a smaller percentage of cases ≥50, at 50.8% it is still over half. Intravenous drug use (IVDU) is the risk factor in almost one-fifth of cases between 13 and 49 (18.7%) but accounts for a lower percentage (12.3%) in the older group. Heterosexual contact as a transmission risk is virtually identical in the two groups (11.9% ≥50 and 12% 13-49).

**Opportunistic Infections.** Regarding the time of AIDS diagnosis and the presence of an opportunistic infection (OI), the MMWR article referenced above notes that

Specifically, the finding that a higher proportion of persons aged ≥50 years were reported with an AIDS-OI and died within 1 month of AIDS diagnosis suggests that persons aged ≥50 years had AIDS diagnosed later during the course of HIV infections than persons aged 13-49 years.

Months Surviving After AIDS Diagnosis and Opportunistic Infection		
Percentile	Age	
	50 & over	13-49
10%	0	0
25%	1	2
50%	4	11
75%	15	22
90%	26	35

**Table 2**

Data from Virginia AIDS cases supports this observation. Table 2 shows that 25% of AIDS patients 50 and older die within a month of the diagnosis and the comparable percentage in the younger group is reached at two months. Older patients who have an opportunistic infection survive for shorter

periods (50% at 4 months, 75% at 15 months) than those who are younger.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AIDS Among Persons Aged ≥50 Years — United States, 1991-1996, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 01/23/98, vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 21-27.

<sup>2</sup> American Indians/Alaskan Natives, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, Others and Unknown. 2.4% of AIDS cases ≥50 and 4.0% of cases in the range 13-49 are grouped in this non-White and non-Black category.

<sup>3</sup> Compiled and written by J Martin